

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

2015 meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on laundering, search, seizure and confiscation of the proceeds from crime and on the financing of terrorism (CETS 198)

**Opening Speech by Thorbjørn Jagland
Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

Strasbourg, 5 November 2015

As delivered

Excellencies,
Chairs and Vice-Chairs,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Council of Europe was the first international organisation to warn of the dangers of dirty money entering the financial system.

And our efforts to combat money laundering continue to be of utmost importance.

Corruption and organised crime are an affront to the rule of law.

They pave the way to instability.

And they are presently a real problem in many European states.

The Warsaw Convention, which this Conference serves, remains the only comprehensive international treaty focused on money laundering.

And it contains extremely important provisions to deal with the financing of terrorism.

After the Charlie Hebdo shootings at the beginning of the year I put terrorism right at the top of the Council of Europe's agenda.

Last month's attack in Ankara was a devastating reminder of how important this remains.

So we are helping member states improve their laws.

On 22 October we launched an Additional Protocol to our Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

It criminalises – for the first time in international law – the early preparations of terrorist acts so that states can more effectively deal with the surge in foreign terrorist fighters.

We are working with schools, youth groups, prisons, civil society and religious leaders to counter violent ideology and prevent radicalisation – particularly online.

We are looking at what European states can do, together, to deal with terrorists acting outside of traditional cell structures – the so-called "lone wolves" and also how we can improve our framework for mutual legal assistance and extradition.

And, through your efforts, and those of MONEYVAL, we are working to disrupt the flow of money to murderers and extremists, too.

It is a vital piece in this jigsaw.

The Warsaw Convention entered into force in 2008.

It now has 26 ratifications, as well as 13 signatories.

This is respectable.

But it's not enough.

And I will continue to press those states who have not yet signed and ratified to do so without delay:

So that their law enforcement can more easily obtain information on bank accounts and improve domestic investigations;

So that they can better co-operate with their neighbours and allies – particularly in order to trace assets;

And because, until all member states have acceded to this instrument, gaps remain which terrorists can exploit.

It is only by harmonising our laws that we can act together, swiftly, to contain growing threats.

This includes, of course, freezing the assets of individuals associated with Da'esh – otherwise known as 'Islamic State' which was a goal set by the UN Security Council last year.

Recently, we have seen some very positive developments.

The United Kingdom ratified in April.

Several weeks ago France announced that ratification is imminent.

The Russian Federation has now informed me that the internal procedures for ratification are underway.

Moreover, Lithuania signed the Convention last week.

This is welcome news and I hope more will follow.

In particular, the European Union is a signatory party, and its accession to this Convention would send a very strong signal indeed.

There are some, however, who think that the Convention does not add much to existing global standards.

They are wrong, on two fronts.

First, the existing standards are soft law, whereas the Warsaw Convention is a binding international treaty.

Money-laundering and terrorist financing are too serious to be regulated at the international level through non-binding commitments alone.

Second, while it is true that, over time, certain aspects of the Warsaw Convention have been incorporated into the global standards others have not.

In particular, it is only through the Warsaw Convention that we maintain sufficiently high standards with respect to freezing, seizure and confiscation measures.

And the Convention it remains particularly strong on its rules on international co-operation, too.

I know that implementing Warsaw – and monitoring implementation – are at the top of your agenda for this meeting, and I welcome that.

My job is urging as many governments as possible to get behind the Convention yours is helping make it a reality on the ground.

In the past you have been careful to avoid duplication with other bodies making use of evaluation visits by MONEYVAL and, very recently, the Financial Action Task Force.

This is an excellent use of resources, and I encourage you to do the same in the future.

You have also placed welcome emphasis on the relationship between the Convention and effective law enforcement.

Again, I am extremely pleased you are continuing down this path.

Good laws are only part of the answer: they need to be enforced.

With that, let me wish you an excellent Conference and let me repeat how strongly I value this work.

Nations in Europe around the world are struggling to deal with organised crime and a new and frightening terrorist threat.

I have promised that the Council of Europe will play our part in meeting this challenge... Your efforts are a crucial part of that.

Thank you very much.